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# International Master Program in System-on-Chip Design

**Fault Tolerant System Design**

## Lecturer

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## Office hours

- No fixed time
- Send me an email with your questions or ask for a meeting

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## Text book

- E. Dubrova, **Fault-Tolerant Design**,  
Springer, 2013

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## Course evaluation

- 5 assignments (20%) (A-F, 60% to pass)
- Midterm exam (20%) (A-F, 60% to pass)
  - 18.5 - 20 A, 16.9 - 18.4 B, 15.3 -16.8 C,  
13.7 - 15.2 D, 12 - 13.6 E, < 12 F
- Final exam (60%) (A-F, 60% to pass)
  - 55.3 - 60 A, 50.5 - 55.2 B, 45.7 - 50.4 C,  
40.9 - 45.6 D, 36 - 40.8 E, < 36 F

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## Course evaluation

- Total grade will be based on the sum of the above three (A-F, 60% to pass)
  - 93 - 100 A, 85 - 92 B, 77 - 84 C, 69 - 76 D, 60 - 68 E, < 60 F

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## Assignments

- 5 assignments, worth 20% of the final grade
  - each consists of 4-5 tasks from textbook, see table at course webpage
  - should be handed to me on the due date (at the lecture)
  - late assignments will get 0 points

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## Examinations

- Midterm exam, 45 min, worth 20% of the final grade
  - will be done during 45 min during the 1<sup>st</sup> hour of the lecture on April 24th, 4-5 tasks
  - cannot be re-done
- Final exam, 4 hours, worth 60% of the final grade, June 1th, 8-12
  - 4 hours, 10-12 tasks

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## PhD students

- Additional component for PhD students:
  - select 2 interesting papers/problems, related to the course material
  - bring them to me for discussion
  - you will read this paper/solve the problem, write a 2-page report and give a 20 min talk at the last lecture

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## Objectives

- understanding fault tolerance
  - faults and their effects (errors, failures)
  - redundancy techniques
  - evaluation of fault-tolerant systems
- balance
  - concepts, underlying principles
  - applications

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## Overview

- Introduction
  - definition of fault tolerance, applications
- Fundamentals of dependability
  - dependability attributes: reliability, availability, safety
  - dependability impairments: faults, errors, failures
  - dependability means
- Dependability evaluation techniques
  - common measures: failure rate, MTTF, MTTR
  - reliability block diagrams
  - Markov processes

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## Overview

- Redundancy techniques
  - space redundancy
    - hardware redundancy
    - information redundancy
    - software redundancy
  - time redundancy

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# International Master Program in System-on-Chip Design

**Introduction to Fault Tolerance**

## Fault tolerance

**fault-tolerance is the ability of a system  
to continue performing its function  
in spite of faults**

**broken connection**

**hardware**

**bug in program**

**software**

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## Easily testable system

- Easily testable system is one whose ability to work correctly can be verified in a simple manner

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## Why do we need fault-tolerance?

- It is practically impossible to build a perfect system
  - suppose a component has the reliability 99.99%
  - a system consisting of 100 non-redundant components will have the reliability 99.01%
  - a system consisting of 10.000 components will have the reliability 36.79%
- It is hard to foresee all the factors

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## Redundancy

- Redundancy is the provision of functional capabilities that would be unnecessary in a fault-free environment
  - replicated hardware component
  - parity check bit attached to digital data
  - a line of program verifying the correctness of the result

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## History

- early computer systems
  - basic components had very low reliability
  - fault-tolerant techniques were need to overcome it
    - redundant structures with voting
    - error-detection and error correction codes

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## History

- early computer systems
  - EDVAC (1949)
    - duplicate ALU and compare results of both
    - continue processing if agreed, else report error
  - Bell Relay Computer (1950)
    - 2 CPU's
    - one unit begin executing the next instruction if the other encouters an error
  - IBM650, UNIVAC (1955)
    - parity check on data transfers

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## History

- Advent of transistors
  - more reliable components
  - led to temporary decrease in the emphasis on fault-tolerant computing
  - designers thought it is enough to depend on the improved reliability of the transistor to guarantee correct computations

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## History

- last decades
  - more critical applications
    - space programs, military applications
    - control of nuclear power stations
    - banking transactions
  - VLSI made the implementation of many redundancy techniques practical and cost effective
  - Other than hardware component faults need to be tolerated:
    - transient faults (soft errors) caused by environmental factors
    - software faults

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## Applications

- **safety-critical** applications
  - critical to human safety
    - aircraft flight control
  - environmental disaster must be avoided
    - chemical plants, nuclear plants
  - requirements
    - 99.99999% probability to be operational at the end of a 3-hour period

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## Applications

- **mission-critical** applications
  - it is important to complete the mission
  - repair is impossible or prohibitively expensive
    - Pioneer 10 was launched 2 March 1970, passed Pluto 13 June 1983
- requirements
  - 95% probability to be operational at the end of mission (e.g. 10 years)
  - may be degraded or reconfigured before (operator interaction possible)

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## Applications

- **business-critical** applications
  - users want to have a high probability of receiving service when it is requested
  - transaction processing (banking, stock exchange or other time-shared systems)
    - ATM: < 10 hours/year unavailable
    - airline reservation: < 1 min/day unavailable

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## Applications

- **maintenance postponement** applications
  - avoid unscheduled maintenance
  - should continue to function until next planned repair (economical benefits)
  - examples:
    - remotely controlled systems
    - telephone switching systems (in remote areas)

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## Goals of fault tolerance

**The main goal of fault tolerance is  
to increase the dependability of a system**

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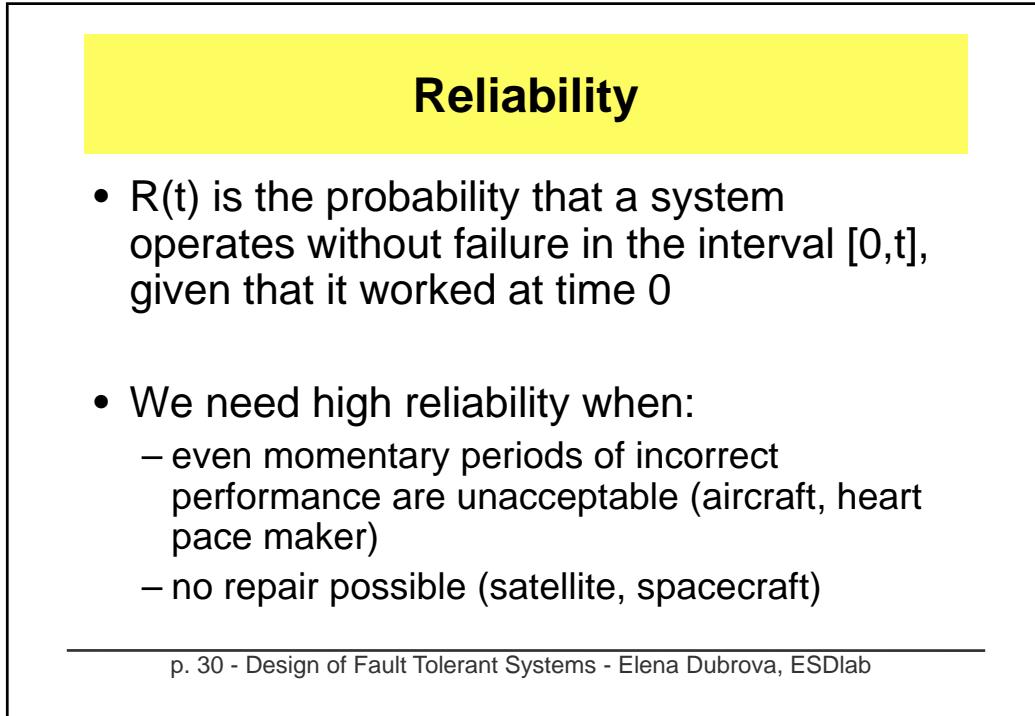
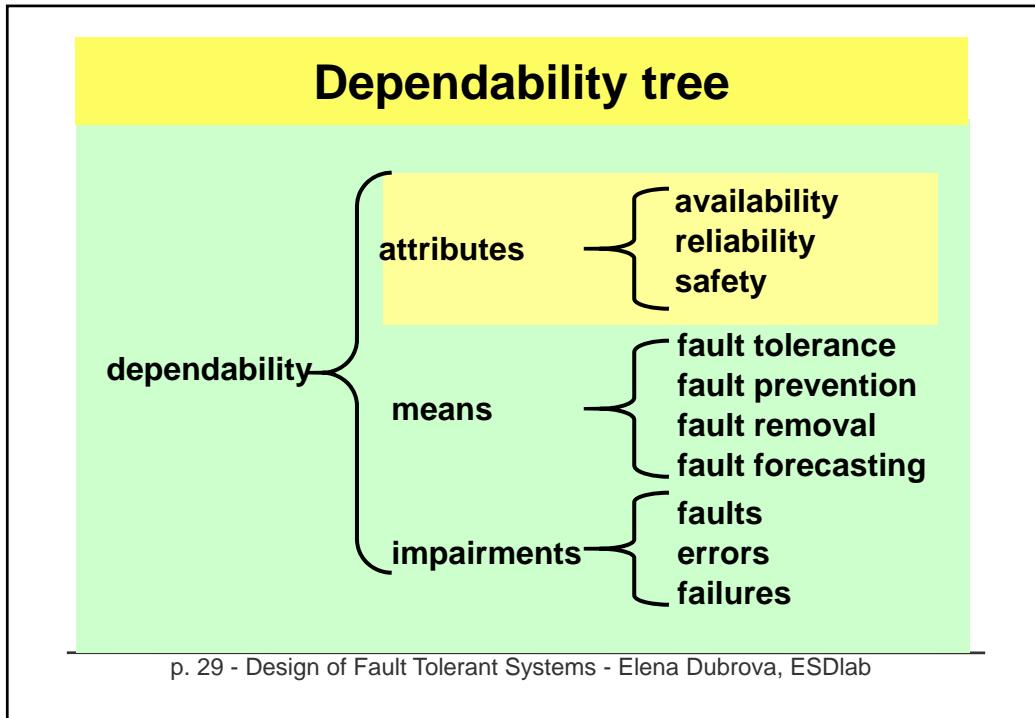
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## Dependability

**Dependability  
is the ability of a system to  
deliver its intended level of  
service to its users**

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## High reliability examples

- airplane:
  - $R(\text{several hours}) = 0.999\ 999\ 9 = 0.97$
- spacecraft:
  - $R(\text{several years}) = 0.95$

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## Reliability versus fault tolerance

- Fault tolerance is a technique that can improve reliability, but
  - a fault tolerant system does not necessarily have a high reliability
  - a system can be designed to tolerate any single error, but the probability of such error to occur can be so high that the reliability is very low

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## Reliability versus fault tolerance

- A highly reliable system is not necessarily fault tolerant
  - a very simple system can be designed using very good components such that the probability of hardware failing is very low
  - but if the hardware fails, the system cannot continue its functions

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## How fault tolerance helps

- Fault tolerance can improve a system's reliability by keeping the system operational when hardware or software faults occur
  - a computer system with one redundant processor can be designed to continue working correctly even if one of the processors fails
  - **QUESTION:** Will a fault-tolerant system always be more reliable than an individual component?

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## Availability

- $A(t)$  is the probability that a system is functioning correctly at the instant of time  $t$
- depends on
  - how frequently the system becomes non-operational
  - how quickly it can be repaired

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## Steady-state availability

- Often the availability assumes a time-independent value after some initial time interval
- This value is called **steady-state** availability  $A_{ss}$
- Steady-state availability is often specified in terms of **downtime** per year
  - $A_{ss} = 90\%$ , downtime = 36.5 days/year
  - $A_{ss} = 99\%$ , downtime = 3.65 days/year

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## Reliability versus availability

- reliability depends on an **interval** of time
- availability is taken at an **instant** of time
- a system can be highly available yet experience frequent periods of being non-operational as long as the length of each period is extremely short

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## High availability examples

- examples
  - transaction processing
    - ATM:  $A_{ss}=0.9_3$  (< 10 hours/year unavailable)
    - banking:  $A_{ss}=0.997$  (< 10 s/hour unavailable)
  - computing
    - supercomputer centres  
 $A_{ss}=0.997$  (< 10 days/year unavailable)
  - embedded
    - telecom:  $A_{ss}=0.9_5$  (< 5 min./year unavailable)

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## How fault tolerance helps

- Fault tolerance can improve a system's availability by keeping the system operational when a failure occurs
  - a spare processor can perform the functions of the system, keeping it available for use, while the primary processor is being repaired

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## Safety

- Safety is the probability that a system will either perform its function correctly or will discontinue its operation in a safe way
- System is safe
  - if it functions correctly, or
  - if it fails, it remains in a safe state

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## High safety examples

- railway signalling
  - all semaphores red
- nuclear energy
  - stop reactor if a problem occur
- banking
  - don't give the money if in doubt

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## Reliability versus safety

- Reliability is the probability that a system will perform its functions correctly
- Safety is the probability that a system will either work correctly or will stop in a manner that causes no harm

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## How fault tolerance helps

- Fault tolerance techniques can improve safety by turning a system off if a failure of a certain sort is detected
  - in a nuclear power plant the reaction process should be stopped if some discrepancy is detected

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## Summary: attributes of dependability

- reliability:
  - continuity of service
- availability:
  - readiness for usage
- safety:
  - non-occurrence of catastrophic consequences

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## Next lecture

- Faults, error and failures
- Design philosophies to combat faults

**Read chapters 1 and 2 of the  
text book**